



Sugar

Summary of Key Trafficking in Persons Issues in Sugar Production

- ✓ Undesirable and Hazardous Work
- ✓ Vulnerable Workforce
 - Child Labor
 - Migrant Labor
 - Casual Labor
- ✓ Presence of Labor Intermediaries
- ✓ Associated Contextual Factors Contributing to TIP Vulnerability
 - Association with Environmental Degradation
 - Association with Large-Scale Land Acquisition/Displacement
 - Association with Organized Crime/Armed Conflict

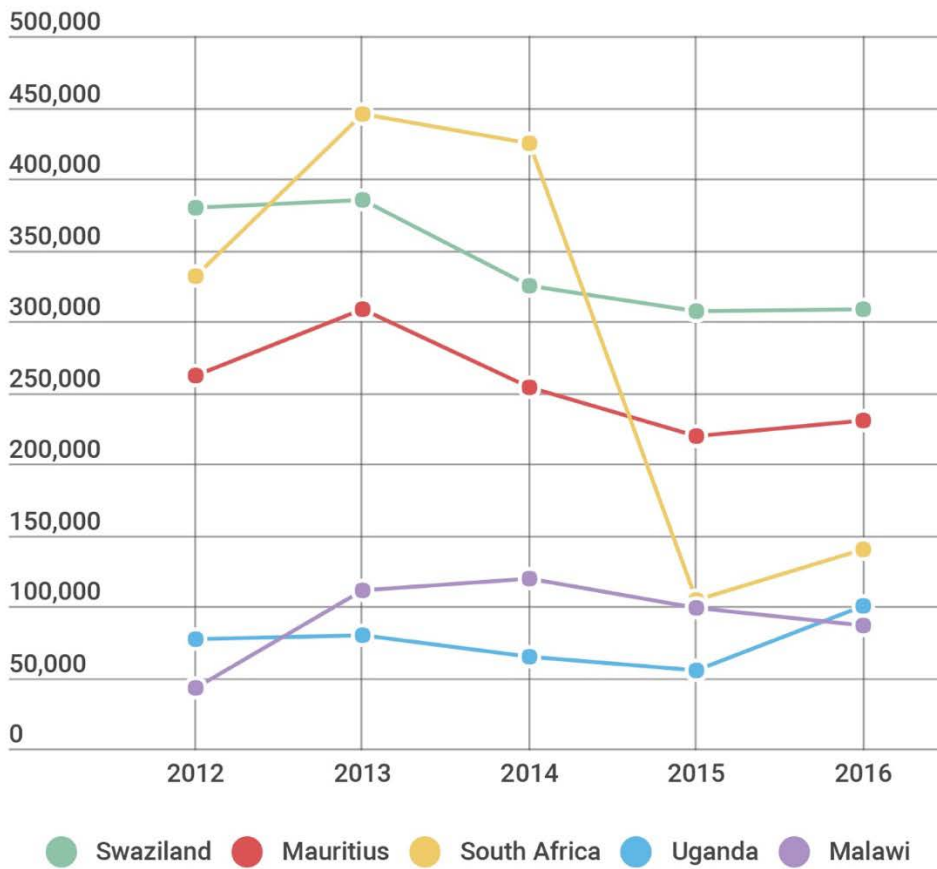
Overview of Sugar Production in sub-Saharan Africa

Trade

The top sugar exporting countries from sub-Saharan Africa are Swaziland, Mauritius, Mozambique, Zambia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Uganda.¹ The countries with the top production yields are Senegal, Malawi, Zambia, Chad, Burkina Faso, Swaziland, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Sudan.²



Top Exporters of Sugar from Sub-Saharan Africa (Value USD/Thousands)



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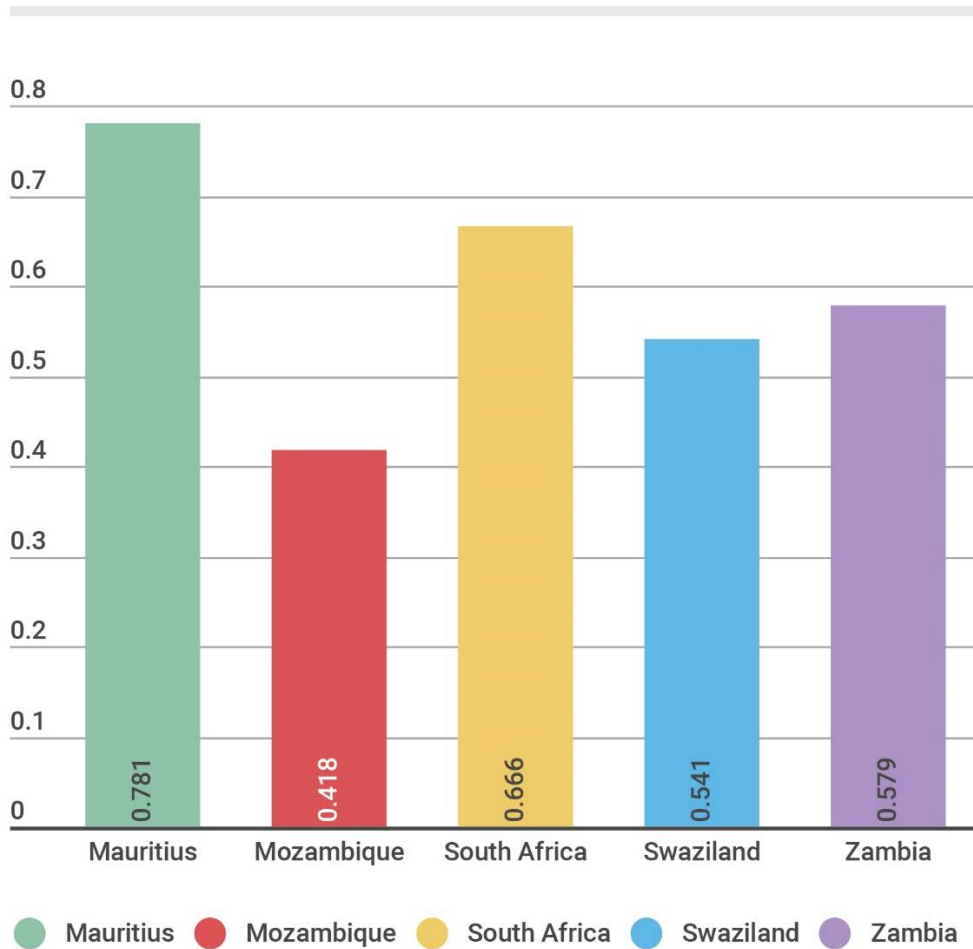
Sub-Saharan Africa grows only about four to five percent of the world’s sugar but it is considered highly efficient.⁴ Several factors have contributed to efficiency of African sugar production. First, the climate of wet hot summers and sunny dry winters is ideal for sucrose growth. Countries with long dry seasons enjoy good conditions for harvesting and processing.⁵ Several sub-Saharan African countries have invested significantly in sugar production, including processing facilities, making it a low cost source of sugar, particularly for European markets.⁶ European demand for sugar is growing, thought to be in part due to increased demand for biofuels.⁷



Further, the European Union’s “Everything but Arms” deal allows “Least Developed Countries” (LDCs) quota- and duty-free access to the European market. Leading European sugar companies have invested heavily in African sugar production – at an estimated USD 3 billion in investment as of 2007.⁸ Sugarcane production in SSA reportedly tripled between 1961 and 2013.⁹

Although the United States is not a top importer of sugar from sub-Saharan Africa overall, it is a significant importer from South Africa.

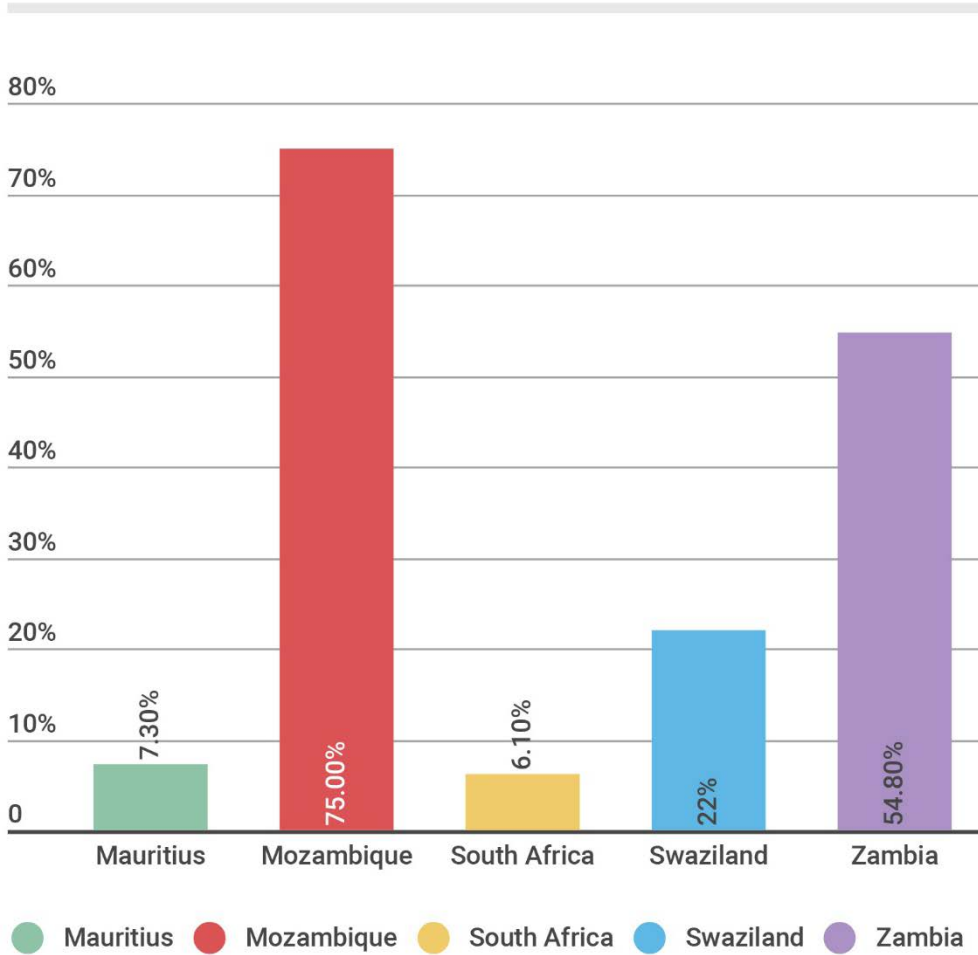
United Nations Human Development Index in Sugar Exporting Countries



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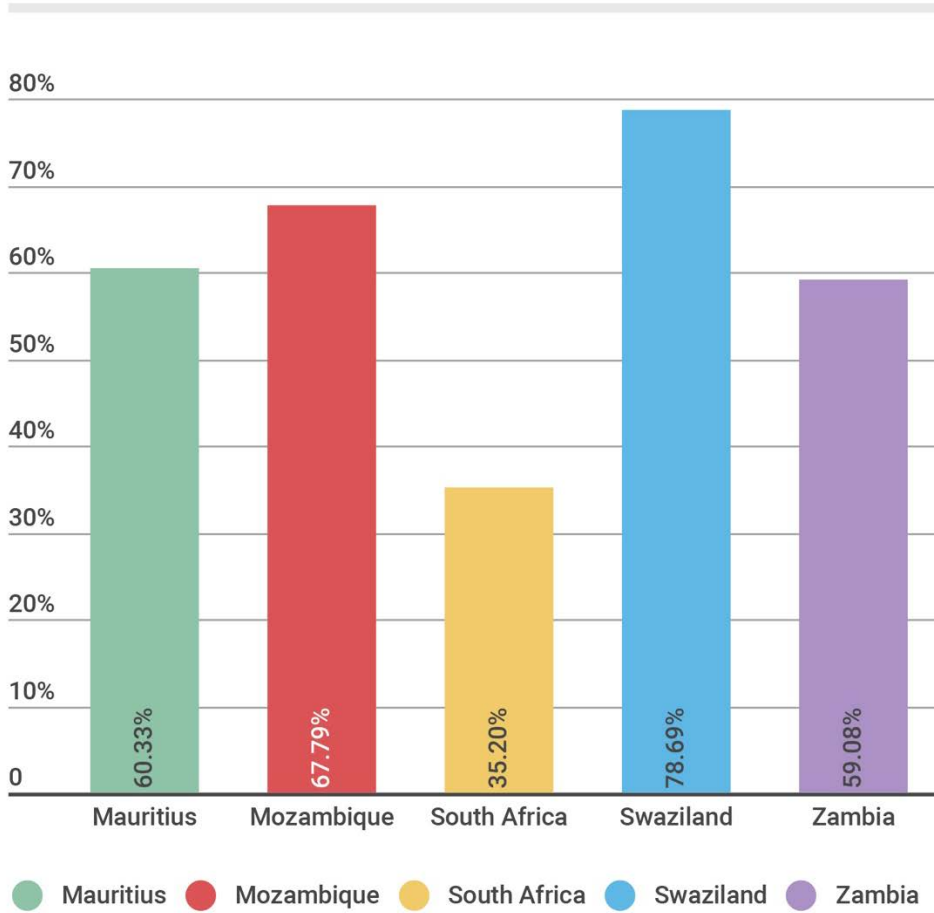
Percent of Population Employed in Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa



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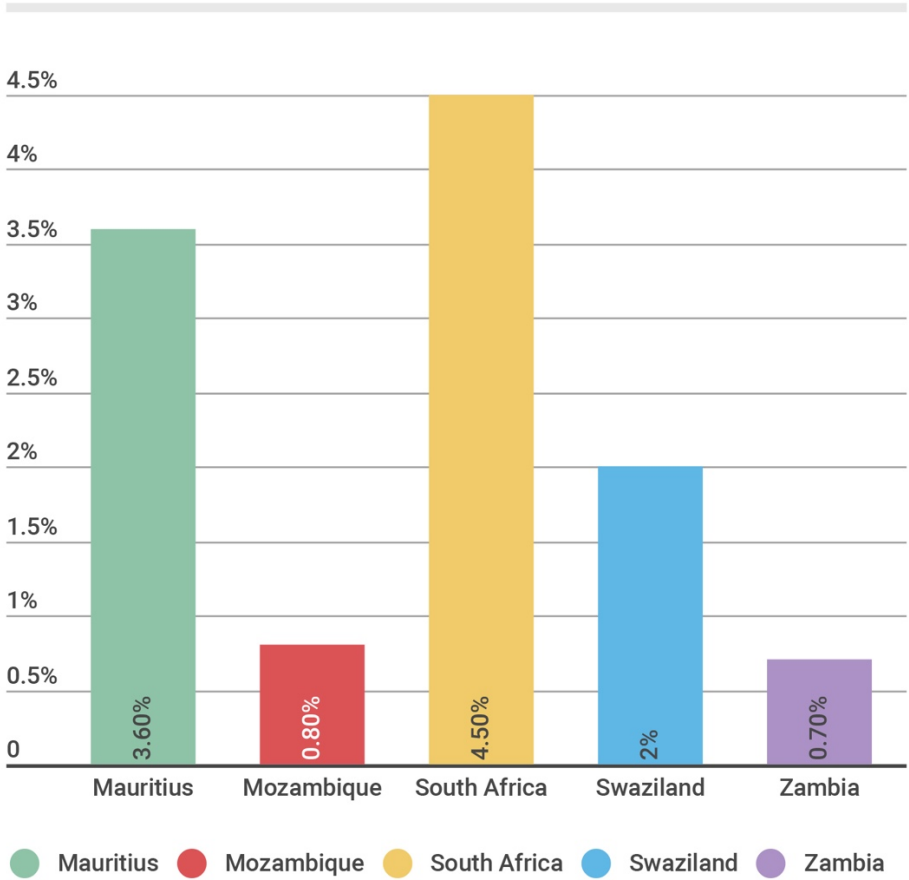
Percentage of Rural Population in Sugar Exporting Countries



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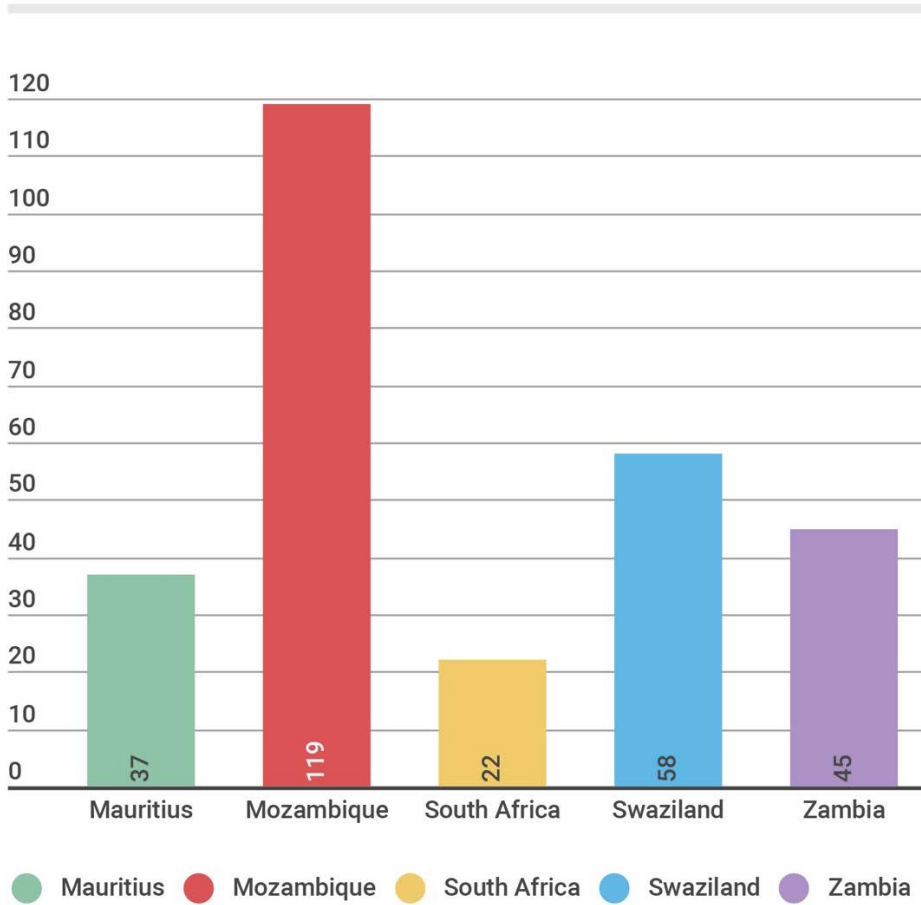
Percentage of Migrant Population in Sugar Exporting Countries



13



Property Rights Rank in Sugar Exporting Countries



14

Features of Production and Supply Chain

Tasks involved in sugarcane production according to the International Labor Organization include land preparation, planting, “applying fertilizer and pesticides, irrigating weeding and harvesting.” After harvesting, the heavy cane is stacked by the sides of the fields while it awaits transportation.¹⁵

Sugarcane can be harvested by hand or by machine, but hand harvesting using machetes is typically preferred to avoid damaging the crop and requires less capital and technological investment. Machine harvesting, while potentially more cost-efficient in the long term, is also capital intensive in the short term. Thus, machine harvesting is typically employed on larger scale estates. Hand-harvesting sugar-



cane is highly labor intensive, and may incentivize growers to use temporary labor arrangements, such as sub-contracted or migrant workers.

After harvest, sugarcane must be quickly transported for processing because it deteriorates quickly. At sugar mills, processing creates raw sugar, which is generally refined into consumer sugar.¹⁶ Other products from sugarcane include bygasse (a byproduct from sugar used for electricity), molasses – formed by repeated crystallization of sugar, animal feed, and ethanol/biofuels.¹⁷

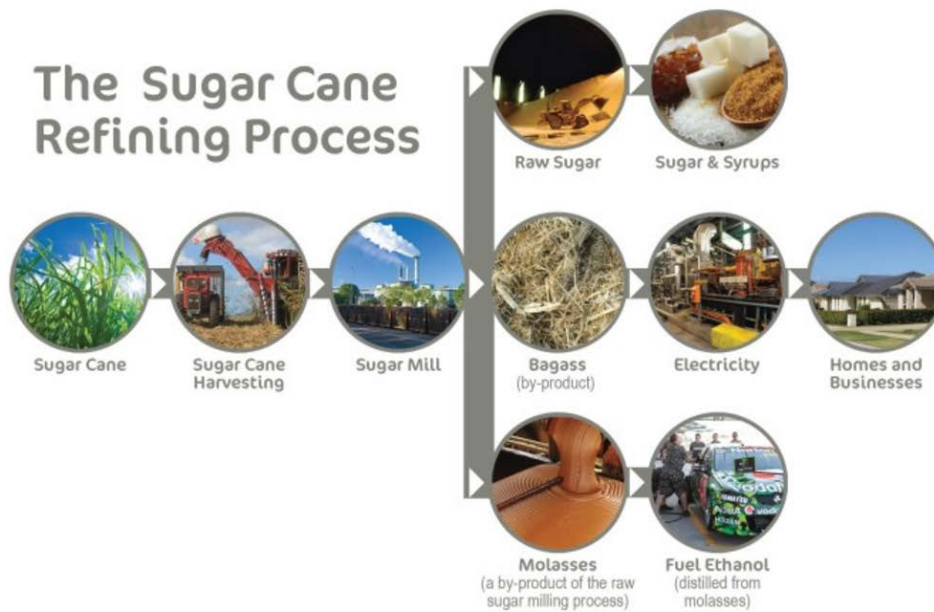


Figure 1 - The Sugar Cane Refining Process. <http://www.csr-sugar.com.au/csr-sugar/about-sugar/>

The structure of the sugar sector in Sub-Saharan Africa is varied. The two main types of production are commercial estates and out-grower schemes. Outgrowers (sometimes referred to as contract farmers) grow sugarcane on their own land, but are contracted to supply a commercial estate or mill company. In the “nucleus” estate variation, a company has a large plantation, but also buys from local growers. While commercial estates are all large in scale, out-grower plots may range significantly in size.

Complete data on the prevalence of different models in sub-Saharan Africa is unavailable, but contract models are reportedly “significant and growing.” In some countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, they constitute the majority of sugar production.^{18 19} Outgrower or contract arrangements can provide farmers with inputs, technology, access to markets, and the potential for reduced financial risk. However, they have also been criticized because of the unequal power relationships between outgrower and company, particularly when they can lead to debt cycles if farmers have to borrow money to invest



in their production and that investment does not pay off in earnings from sales to the company.²⁰ Previous research has also noted that the expansion of outgrower schemes can function as a form of land-grabbing on the part of the company.²¹

Key Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Tantalum, Tungsten, and Tin Production

Undesirable and Hazardous Work

Sugar presents significant work hazards in general. Burning fields prior to harvest is a common practice, intended to burn dry leaves and rid the area of pests, while leaving stalks and roots intact.²² This practice, however, can cause significant respiratory distress for nearby residents.²³ Other health hazards from hand harvesting include injuries from machetes, carrying heavy loads, exposure to pesticides, injuries from machinery, and heat exposure.²⁴ Workers on plantations, particularly vulnerable subcontracted or migrant workers, may face illegally long hours or low pay.

One survey of 120 workers across Kenya's major sugar firms found that 42 percent of workers felt working conditions were poor, and most workers worked 12 hours per day, though Kenyan law states that normal working hours should not exceed 8 per day. Some workers also claimed that they did not receive adequate personal protective equipment.²⁵ In 2016, over 1,000 workers at Kwale International Sugar Company plantation staged a strike and burned sugarcane in protest over not receiving pay in nearly one month.²⁶ Sexual harassment is also reportedly a problem for workers in the sugar industry.^{27,28} In December 2014, violent riots at a Chinese-run sugar refinery in Madagascar attracted international attention. At least four people were killed at the SUCOMA refinery, including two Chinese employees. The facility was burned and sugar was stolen, resulting in an estimated USD 80 million in damages.^{29,30} The workers' grievances included extremely low pay, at about USD 37 per month, poor working conditions, and refusal to provide seasonal workers with full-time contracts.^{31,32} According to one source, workers rioted in response to their union representatives being detained.³³ The Parliament's Agricultural Committee in Malawi, expressed concerns over poor working conditions, including a lack of PPE, at a factory that opened in 2016.³⁴ Accidents and injuries are reportedly common on both plantations and in factories. Workers face difficulties in receiving compensation for work-related injuries and have reportedly been fired for requesting such compensation.³⁵ Illovo employs roughly 10,000 "agency workers" through contractors. These workers do not receive written contracts, do not receive benefits, and are not unionized, according to research by SOMO.³⁶ Workers must meet daily targets and often work over eight hours per day. SOMO found that workers who declined to work on Sundays often suffered dismissals or disciplinary action.³⁷ Workers are paid only USD 1.40 per day for reaching targets, but often fail to meet them.³⁸



Interference with freedom of association rights has also been reported. Officials in the Sugar and Plantation Workers Union of Malawi have complained of harassment by both Illovo management and the police.³⁹ Workers participating in a 2011 strike to demand better wages were immediately fired by Illovo over, among other issues, holding a union meeting without the company's permission.⁴⁰ In South Africa, working conditions in the sugar industry are worse than in other sectors, according to one report.⁴¹ Working conditions sometimes violate local health and safety legislation, and many workers do not receive personal protection equipment.⁴² One article documented poor living conditions in employer-provided housing, including lack of running water and toilets and inadequate access to clean drinking water.⁴³ According to one source, union organizers have reportedly been threatened when attempting to visit farms, and have been arrested by security militias for talking to workers on plantations.⁴⁴ Some workers experience violence at the hands of farmers or their supervisors.⁴⁵ Workers also frequently receive extremely low wages, far less than the minimum wage, due in part to use of payment systems based on piece-rates.⁴⁶ In Swaziland, the ITUC reported that workers frequently work over 60 hours per week, though government regulations state that a normal work week is 54 hours, and most do not receive the overtime rate mandated by the government, with some not receiving any payment for overtime work. While seasonal workers are legally entitled to maternity leave, in practice, female employees must take a pregnancy test and are not employed the following season if they are found to be pregnant. Most workers do not receive personal protection equipment.⁴⁷ Deaths at sugar mills due to unsafe working conditions have also been reported.⁴⁸

Officials in the Sugar and Plantation Workers Union of Malawi have complained of harassment by both Illovo management and the police.⁴⁹ Workers participating in a 2011 strike to demand better wages were immediately fired by Illovo over, among other issues, holding a union meeting without the company's permission.⁵⁰ In Swaziland, seasonal employees who engage in union activities often are not hired back the next season.⁵¹ In one case in 2011, approximately 30 workers were dismissed from a cane cutting company following their attempts to establish a union. Workers at the company had also complained of sexual harassment by a manager.⁵² Strikes by workers have turned violent and damaged property in recent years. In 2014, demanding a pay increase, 3,000 employees at Ubombo Sugar, owned by Illovo, participated in a work stoppage, and 170 hectares of cane were burned.⁵³ In Mozambique in 2009, the ITUC reported that strikes in the sugar sector were frequently suppressed, and violence against strikers occurred, sometimes involving state forces.⁵⁴ In one notable incident in 2007, one worker was shot dead and three others injured during a strike by roughly 4,000 seasonal workers on a plantation.⁵⁵

Vulnerable Workforce

Child Labor

Child labor has been reported in Kenya's sugar industry. The US DOL and US DOS reported evidence of children working in sugar production in 2015.⁵⁶ A 2011 report documented children aged 10-12 cutting



cane on a plantation in Kenya. Families who are unable to pay for their children's schooling may send them to work in the cane fields.⁵⁷ The US DOL has reported that children are involved in planting and harvesting sugar,⁵⁸ and the US DOS noted that forced child labor occurred on sugar plantations in Malawi in its 2015 TIP report. The 2009-2016 Child Labour National Action Plan explains that the tenancy system in smallholder farms for sugar is designed to pressure tenants to use their family members to meet high targets set by landlords.⁵⁹ Reports of child labor have surfaced in connection to Rwanda's sugar industry. In 2015, the US DOL reported that children were involved in producing sugarcane, though "evidence of this activity [was] limited and/or the extent of the problem [was] unknown."⁶⁰ A 2010 Winrock International assessment found that children worked on sugarcane farms and in sugarcane factories. Twelve out of 549 children interviewed for the assessment reported leaving school to work in sugarcane. In Nyarugenge District, key informants reported that sugarcane farming was a factor preventing children from attending school, and in both Nyamasheke and Nyarugenge districts, parents highlighted working in sugarcane as one of the "worst kinds of work" children could be involved in.⁶¹ Minors frequently work on the sugarcane farms supplying Kabuye (described below), and observers in some areas have noted that boys between the ages of 8 and 15 comprise up to one-third of harvesters.⁶²

Child labor was reportedly common in the sugar sector in Uganda and sometimes prevented children from attending school.⁶³ According to the US DOL, children are involved in cutting, collecting, and carrying sugarcane, which Ugandan law recognizes as hazardous.⁶⁴ Child labor was also reported at a sugar factory.⁶⁵

In Zimbabwe, child labor is common on sugar plantations, according to the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and the Zimbabwean Working Group to end Child Labor.^{66, 67} The USDOL has also reported involvement of children in sugarcane production.⁶⁸ The sugarcane industry in Chiredzi, a town in Southeastern Zimbabwe, reportedly depends upon child labor. Here, children often work as farm laborers on large plantations, in violation of labor law. Boys typically work cutting sugar cane, while girls irrigate crops. Many of these child workers have dropped out of school and their living conditions are poor. Politicians often own the plantations where children work.⁶⁹ UNICEF has also reported that among child-headed households, of which there are 100,000 in Zimbabwe, many children must work, including as laborers on sugar plantations, to provide for their younger siblings.⁷⁰

Casual Workforce

Many sugar companies utilize "agency" or casual workers employed through third-party contractors. These casual workers are often migrants. These outsourced workers typically lack protections provided to permanent workers. While not necessarily indicative of trafficking, these arrangements contribute to an increased risk, particularly when they involve vulnerable migrants. In Malawi, Illovo employs roughly 10,000 "agency workers" through contractors. These workers do not receive written contracts, do not receive benefits, and are not unionized, according to research by SOMO.^{71 72}



In 2013, the ITUC reported that many migrants on sugar plantations in Mauritius work under short-term contracts and in practice are unable to organize.⁷³ Domestic migrant workers in Mozambique are often hired on seasonal contracts, particularly for cane cutting,⁷⁴ and work along with people from local populations.⁷⁵ According to one report, migrant workers travel great distances seeking these opportunities, with some male migrants coming from Malawi, and the supply of workers far outstrips the demand for their labor.⁷⁶ In Kenya, casual workers hired via a contractor are reportedly used on nucleus estates. At one estate visited by ITUC in 2008, there were 1,200 permanent workers compared to 12,000 casual workers.⁷⁷ In addition, migrant male laborers reportedly work on estates in Zimbabwe on a seasonal basis.⁷⁸

Migrant Labor

In 2010, 28 Indian workers in Uganda accused Mayuge Sugar Factory of subjecting them to forced labor. After being promised high wages, they reportedly had their passports confiscated, were beaten to make them work, and received low wages. They were prohibited from leaving the compound.⁷⁹ Prison labor at a sugar processing factory and on sugar farms has also been documented.⁸⁰

Presence of Labor Intermediaries

There have been some reports of trafficking of migrants from Mozambique⁸¹ and Swaziland into South Africa for work on sugarcane farms and estates.⁸² According to one account, unregistered labor brokers in Maputo, Mozambique deceive men from Swaziland and Mozambique by offering them work in construction in South Africa. These men are then smuggled into South Africa to work on sugarcane fields, primarily for medium-sized commercial farmers, and to a lesser extent, large agricultural companies. At the Mozambique border, military border guards sometimes sell these men to brokers in South Africa. Both men and women from Mozambique may be held in debt bondage as cane cutters. If they lack passports, paying for false documents procured by their brokers sometimes forces them into debt bondage. On arriving at the farms, these workers have their documents retained.⁸³



Associated Contextual Factors Contributing to Trafficking in Persons Vulnerability

Association with Large-Scale Land Acquisition/Displacement

Sugar production requires a large amount of land, so companies seek control of land for estate or outgrower production. This can take the form of forced evictions or coercion to participate in outgrower schemes. Farmers in some regions may be coerced into participating in outgrower schemes.

In Kenya, The Mumias Sugar Company has plans to develop 20,000 hectares, which have been met with protest by local communities.⁸⁴

Large-scale land acquisitions are also a problem in the sugar industry in Malawi.^{85,86} Forced evictions by the Cane Growers Trust and local police have been reported, and according to a BBC article, two farmers were killed while resisting land seizures.⁸⁷ Affected communities suffer adverse impacts on their food security and livelihood opportunities.⁸⁸

In Mozambique, The Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) described one seizure of land by Illovo which destroyed local livelihoods and opportunities for subsistence farming. The community involved claimed that Illovo cut off irrigation water to households that resisted participating in sugarcane cultivation.⁸⁹

People in Zambia were threatened with destruction of their homes for refusing to participate in an Illovo outgrowing scheme.⁹⁰

In Swaziland, many families have been forcibly evicted from their land without compensation and resettled in areas with poorer quality land. Relocated communities often face severe poverty.^{91,92}

An Indian company in Uganda recently received 40,000 hectares of communal land for sugar plantations and a factory, which local communities resisted.⁹³

In Rwanda, the country's only sugar producer remained Kabuye Sugar Works, which is owned by the Madhvani Group, a Ugandan company. Over 10,000 mill staff, laborers, and outgrowers produce and process sugar for Kabuye. Madhvani received a 50-year lease on 3,100 hectares of land in 1997 to cultivate sugar and establish the factory. The transfer of land deprived residents of access to land they had used for years and was met with violent protests. Residents of these areas have reported that they were adversely impacted by the take-over and now depend upon Kabuye Sugar Works as an employer or purchaser of sugar.⁹⁴

The government in Sudan has claimed that it aims to expand production from under 200,000 hectares to 1.7 million hectares, raising alarm among some advocacy groups. In 2008, protestors demanding compensation for land that had been taken to build a sugar plant clashed with police, leaving two dead.⁹⁵



Association with Organized Crime/Armed Conflict

Smuggling of sugar into Kenya from Somalia is a severe problem, and reportedly enriches Somali warlords and Al Shabab, which levies taxes on trucks with illicit goods, including sugar, leaving Somalia for Kenya. Smugglers avoid paying Kenyan tariffs on imported sugar.^{96,97}



Gift of the United States Government

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Endnotes

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